



WORKING BEE REPORT April 26-28, 2019

FRIDAY, April 26

Our working bee was a bit later this month than is normally the case, since we normally meet on the first weekend of the even months, not the last. What with Liz being away in Morocco, and the public holidays, it seemed a good idea to move it. We had also been hoping we might have had some rain prior to this weekend, to avoid having to water late in the season. Fat chance!!

So Friday lunch time, the core group of 4 members were at Cape Jervis, ready to start. Carolyn and Liz did the pre-working bee site inspection, to ensure what was planned for Saturday and Sunday was indeed appropriate. We were pleased to see the new path that the Yankalilla Council has cut for us, in the “shady grove”.



This is part of the long nature trail we have been constructing over the past 6 years. The plan is to link the Council's path through the township with our first path along Flinders Drive, then to cut through the Crown Land to the shady grove, eventually going “over the hill” to our lower loop and the coastal display garden. Bit by bit it is all happening. The council lads did a good job, giving us a great path about 1.5m wide. Thanks, guys!

Mystery question for the month: what is this a picture of?

Carolyn pointed this out to Liz on site. Carolyn knew it, Liz didn't. Do you?

See the answer at the end of the report!



While Carolyn and Liz were on site, they were joined by a couple of members of COOTS (Conservation of our Threatened Species, a subgroup of the Australian Plant Society SA). Their working bee was also on at Cape Jervis (Lands End) this weekend; in fact, both Carolyn and Liz would normally have been at THEIR working bee this weekend, but for our change of dates! So it was good to catch up with Jeff and Aysha, and chat about common problems and goals, etc. Jeff was interested to see the early sundew *Drosera praefolia*, one of several sundews we have on site. This one is extra special, for a couple of reasons. This sundew produces its flowers before its leaves AND it is listed as “vulnerable” on the Southern Fleurieu (KAN02). Carolyn led the group to the outcrop where we know they occur, and stopped to look around for them, when Jeff announced that he thought we had found them...there was a flower just 5 cm from his boot! Well judged, Carolyn, and well spotted, Jeff!



The dry weather has caused us, and a lot of other folk, we know, a lot of concern. Many of the natives are looking very stressed. The leaves on lots of plants were pale green or yellow, or burnt off completely. There are shades of red, another telltale sign, where there shouldn't be any red. Some new plantings of some species died completely. Even established hardy plants like *Kunzea* and *Lomandra*, etc., are feeling the effects of the very dry year. Here are two photos showing how the plants are suffering. Note the colours, so different to what is usually expected.



We are always amazed though, by the toughness of some of our plants. Just when you begin to get discouraged by, say, many of the 2018 plantings of *Leucopogon* dying, you find banksias and eucalypts that have thrived! We only plant from local seed, so it isn't just a case of choosing varieties not suitable for the area... just a really tough year for all but the toughest species.

After Jeff and Aysha left for the COOTS site at Cape Jervis, Carolyn and Liz sat down with Pedro and Chrissy for a planning session for the year. We were unsuccessful in our grant application this year. That means we do not have the extra money we were hoping for to pay for extra weed control. However, it also means that the pressure is off a bit in that we could terminate our plans to run a workshop this year. Since the group's inception, we have tried to host a workshop every year, since we believe sharing knowledge and experiences helps all landcare groups and hence the environment at large, in the long run. Running workshops etc takes time though, and with the small size of our group, a luxury we cannot afford when we need to spend more time on "core business" such as weeding. So part of the afternoon meeting was to discuss what we would concentrate on in the next few working bees. We knew from our site inspection that our original plans for THIS working bee were spot on...water, water, water, with weeding and tree guard removal thrown in for good measure. With Carolyn and Liz both suffering from colds, and Pedro nursing a bad back, that was more than enough, we thought!

SATURDAY, April 27

As we've pointed out in other working bee reports, there is no water source on site. All the water we use on site is taken from Carolyn's rain water tanks. So invariably over the summer, and this year over autumn as well, Pedro starts his Saturday by filling heaps of 10 litre containers with water, stacking them in his 4WD then transporting them to the site.



So here we have Pedro's car all filled up with those 10 L water containers, and Carolyn's car filled with everything else we might need...brush cutter and associated PPE, gloves, tools for volunteers, etc. Good thing we can get the cars on site. Remember those water containers all weigh in at more than 10 kg (closer to 12 kg when filled to the brim as they were).

So it was a bit of bad luck when Pedro's car wouldn't start, and all the containers had to be moved out again...and he had done such a neat job of stacking them in! Still, they all fitted in Liz's little car, so were all transported to the site successfully. So while everyone else was down on the lower loop,



Just a flat battery, but the recharger, then jumper leads to Carolyn's car hadn't managed to kick it over. The RAA were pretty quick, and had a super lithium battery, so it wasn't long before Pedro was back in business!

On the last working bee, Chris had spent quite a bit of time weeding on the lower loop, particularly near our interpretive sign. This is a spot people often stop at, so we like to have it looking particularly nice. It was good to see Chris's efforts have paid off, for that area was still looking well-tended. At least the dry weather has inhibited some of the weed growth as well!! So we watered and weeded like crazy until morning tea time. Just as we finished that, reinforcements arrived, in the shape of Suz and Vince and their little family. The extra hands were really appreciated.



Nice to see one of our gums, *Eucalyptus leucoxydon*, flowering. The ants were enjoying the nectar. Liz worked diligently to remove scabiosa from the direct seeing site. Even though we are yet to see more than about 10 new seedlings, the site looks so much better than the field of scabiosa seed heads it was 14 months ago. Hopefully the rains that came in the two weeks after the working bee will encourage the native seed to germinate! Fingers crossed.



After lunch, we moved our operations to Sorata St, the shady grove and the “bad lands”. The clean-ups we had done there in December and February had paid off. There were fewer large patches of weeds in our plantings on Sorata St and the shady grove to cope with (of course there is a massive infestation of scabiosa in our “bad lands” section!). Hundreds of small olives were removed by hand, while those that couldn’t easily be removed were tagged for poisoning later. Cyclops were pulled or lopped. 3 year old Camellia had a great time eating muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*) and saltbush fruits, while her 4 month old sister Ginkgo slept in her pusher.



Liz spent some time with the mattock, levelling out the remains of a rabbit warren that had always been a trap for the unwary (people that is, not rabbits!).



It was an extremely uneven mound, with lots of potholes and exposed dead roots etc. There was even several large pieces of chicken wire underground... maybe the rabbits used the wire for reinforcing!! The new path went through part of the mound and flattened that section, so the job was not as big as it might have been earlier.

In June we will be doing some planting around there, to replace the weeds that used to thrive on the old mound. As well, Carolyn found some convolvulus seed nearby, so we scratched them into the new level patch of exposed soil. Now all we need is some rain to start the seed off!! And the rains came, so Carolyn did some more seeding two weeks later – see the post-script for more details.

In 2017, we had planted several hundred tubes in the centre section of the site (the bad lands referred to above). It was satisfying to see the progress many of those plants have made, to the point where guards could be removed. Here are the before and after shots of those efforts.



The photos don't show just how many plants were over the top of the guards. We just need to find time / more volunteers to control the weedy veldt grass in this area. It would look so much better and help the native grasses and sedges that are already growing throughout the area, by removing competition for light and water.



Certainly looks a lot better, without all the corflute guards out there! Even one of the neighbours commented how much better it looks.

The guards often rip where the stake goes through them, because of the highwinds at Cape Jervis. So not all can be re-used. It takes too much time to sort on site, so the easiest way to transport all the guards back to home base for sorting, was to just put them in wool sacks and drag them home. We do love our wool bales –good for so many things!



The day ended with a champagne toast to Chris and Pedro, who celebrated the 56th wedding anniversary that Saturday. Congratulations to the two of you! And thanks for choosing to spend the day helping protect the biodiversity hotspot at Cape Jervis.

SUNDAY, April 28

The Sunday dawned with little wind and a clear blue sky. We hit the site relatively early. Pedro again was watering while Carolyn and Liz weeded. Chris spent the morning sorting good tree guards from bad, in the shed. That'll save us lots of hassles next planting time.

Liz and Carolyn were amazed at how relatively cyclops-free the remnant patch of scrub was along the remnant patch on the southern edge of the site. Sadly though, lots of olives, especially under the powerlines where the birds poop! We must have put out another 150 pins for future poisoning.

The *Leucopogon* in this area of the site were looking particularly stressed. Just alive. It will be very interesting to see how quickly they recover (assuming that most of them will).



We worked without a break for 3 hours, then called it quits. We achieved a lot though, even with such a small group. Lots of olives were pinned for later removal, lots of cyclops were lopped, and lots of struggling young plants were watered.

After repacking all the gear in the shed, we had another visit from COOTS volunteers: Jeff, Aysha and John. They joined us in coffee / tea and cake. We swapped stories on what each group had achieved over the weekend (both groups have lots of cyclops to deal with!), then the COOTS group went off to lopper more cyclops along Sorata St for us. John was still there a couple of hours later removing cyclops and olives from the *Eucalyptus* patch on the corner of Fleurieu Ave and Flinders Drive. Thanks, guys...your efforts were really appreciated.



One job we undertake at our April working bee is to take a series of photos from our set photo points. Here is a picture of the lower loop this April.



Answer to the mystery question: Echidna scat!

Thanks to fellow volunteer Julie Tetlow for showing Carolyn “her first echidna scat” on her block near Talisker mine a few weeks.

Here’s some more photos for the curious – two more scats from the Cape Jervis region, and an Echidna – near Talisker mine.

If you are a keen citizen scientist and find Echidna scats, you can send them in to Adelaide Uni. <https://grutznerlab.weebly.com/echidna-csi.html>



And can you help us ID this plant?

Do any of you know what this weed is? At least we think it's a weed. Some form of chenopod, a species of *Chenopodium*? It has benefited from our summer waterings.



Post-Script

With the breaking rains the week after the working bee (we had 28.5 mm – whoo hoo!), Carolyn took advantage of the left over direct seeding mix from last year. This would help us check the theory that it's better to sow when the weather is a bit warmer (as long as the ground is wet). Two small patches were sown (rake, spread, rake, and stomp!). Here are photos of the area that Liz smoothed out adjacent to the new path, where the old rabbit warren was. The next day, there were lots of ants crawling over the area (stealing our seed??), and quite a few red velvet mites (there are actually 2 in the photo below – can you guess which way the heads are facing?). Fingers crossed that we see a quicker seed germination response this year than last year.

